

AN INVOCATION TO SPRING.

BY H. MELIBRUS MADRICK.

"Come, gentle spring! Ethereal Mildness, come And from the bosom of yon dropping cloud, While music wakes around, void'd in a shower Of shadowing roses, on our plains descend."

Come, sweet love-inspiring Spring, Ounce again thy treasures bring; Let us see thy radiant face Beaming with its wonted grace! Let us hear again thy voice Endless love to heaven bearing; Let the earth again rejoice— God's omnipotence declaring, Till united in fond love Earth shall be to heav'n above.

In his glittering armor clad, Winter long his reign has had; In his bonds, cold and unfeeling, All the world below congealing; Winter moons have wax'd and waned, Ice and snow have long had sway, And cold winds have oft prevailed; Gales of Spring! with thy bright ray Melt this icy bond to love; Wed the earth to heav'n above!

From Chambers's Journal.

OCEOLA:

A ROMANCE.—BY CAPT. M. REID.

CHAPTER V.

THE MULATTO AND HIS FOLLOWER.

Not without some surprise did I make this discovery. What was the mulatto doing in the woods at such an hour? It was not his habit to be so thrifty; on the contrary, it was difficult to rouse him to his daily work. He was not a hunter—had no taste for it. I never saw him go after game—though, from being always in the woods, he was well acquainted with the haunts and habits of every animal that dwelt there. What was he doing abroad on this particular morning?

I remained on my perch to watch him, at the same time keeping an eye upon the deer. It soon became evident that the mulatto was not after these; for, on coming out of the timber, he turned along its edge, in a direction opposite to that in which the deer had gone. He went straight towards the gap that led into the maize-field.

I noticed that he moved slowly and in a crouching attitude. I thought there was some object near his feet: it appeared to be a dog, but a very small one. Perhaps an opossum, thought I. It was of whitish colour, as these creatures are; but in the distance I could not distinguish between an opossum and a puppy. I fancied, however, that it was the pouched animal; that he had caught it in the woods, and was leading it along in a string.

There was nothing remarkable or improbable in all this behaviour. The mulatto may have discovered an opossum-cave the day before, and set a trap for the animal. It may have been caught in the night, and he was now on his way home with it. The only point that surprised me was, that the fellow had turned hunter; but I explained this upon another hypothesis. I remembered how fond the negroes are of the flesh of the opossum, and Yellow Jake was no exception to the rule. Perhaps he had seen the day before, that this one could be easily obtained, and had resolved upon having a roast?

But why was he not carrying it in a proper manner? He appeared to be leading or dragging it rather— for I knew the creature would not be led—and every now and then I observed him stoop towards it, as if caressing it!

I was puzzled! it could not be an opossum. I watched the man narrowly till he arrived opposite the gap in the fence. I expected to see him step over the bars—since through the maize-field was the nearest way to the house. Certainly he entered the field; but, to my astonishment, in-

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stead of climbing over in the usual manner, I saw him take out bar after bar, down to the very lowest. I observed, moreover, that he flung the bars to one side, leaving the gap quite open!

He then passed through, and entering among the corn, in the same crouching attitude, disappeared behind the broad blades of the young maize-plants.

For a while I saw no more of him, or the whit object that he 'toated' along with him in such a singular fashion.

I turned my attention to the deer: they had got over their alarm, and had halted near the middle of the savanna, where they were now quietly browsing.

But I could not help pondering upon the eccentric manoeuvres I had just been witness of; and once more I bent my eyes towards the place, where I had last seen the mulatto.

He was still among the maize-plants. I could see nothing of him; but at that moment my eyes rested upon an object that filled me with fresh surprise.

Just at the point where Yellow Jake had emerged from the woods, something else appeared in motion—also coming out into the open savanna. It was a dark object, and from its prostrate attitude, resembled a man crawling forward upon his hands, and dragging his limbs after him.

For a moment or two, I believed it to be a man—not a white man—but a negro or an Indian. The tactics were Indian, but we were at peace with these people, and why should one of them be thus trailing the mulatto? I say 'trailing,' for the attitude and motions, of whatever creature I saw, plainly indicated that it was following upon the track which Yellow Jake had just passed over.

Was it Black Jake who was after him?

This idea came suddenly into my mind: I remembered the vendetta that existed between them; I remembered the conflict in which Yellow Jake had used his knife. True, he had been punished, but not by Black Jake himself. Was the latter now seeking to revenge himself in person?

This might have appeared the easiest explanation of the scene that was mystifying me; had it not been for the improbability of the black acting in such a manner. I could not think that the noble fellow would seek any mean mode of retaliation, however revengeful he might feel against one who had so basely attacked him. It was not in keeping with his character. No. It could not be he who was crawling out of the bushes.

Nor he, nor any one. At that moment, the golden sun flashed over the savanna. His beams glanced along the green-sward, lighting the trees to their bases. The dark form emerged out of the shadow, and turned head towards the maize-field. The long prostrate body glittered under the sun with a sheen like scaled armour. It was easily recognised. It was not negro—not Indian—not human: it was the hideous form of an alligator!

CHAPTER VI.

THE ALLIGATOR.

To one brought up—born, I might almost say—upon the banks of a Floridian river, there is nothing remarkable in the sight of an alligator! Nothing very terrible either; for, ugly as is the great saurian—certainly the most repulsive form in the animal kingdom—it is least dreaded by those who know it best. For all that, it is seldom approached without some feeling of fear. The stranger to its haunts and habits, although it flees from it; and even the native—who he red, white or black—whose home borders the swamp and the lagoon, approaches this gigantic lizard with caution.

Some closet naturalists have asserted that the alligator will not attack man, and yet they admit that it will destroy horses and horned cattle. A like allegation is made of the jaguar and vampire bat. Strange assertions, in the teeth of a thousand testimonies to the contrary.

It is true the alligator does not always attack man when an opportunity offers—nor does the lion, nor yet the tiger—but even the false Buffon would scarcely be bold enough to declare that the alligator is innocuous. If a list could be furnished of human beings who have

fallen victims to the voracity of this creature, since the days of Columbus, it would be found to be something enormous—quite equal to the havoc made in the same period of time by the Indian tiger or the African lion. Humboldt, during his short stay in South America, was well informed of many instances; and for my part, I know of more than one case of actual death, and many of lacerated limbs, received at the jaws of the American alligator.

There are many species, both of the catman or alligator, and of the true crocodile, in the waters of tropical America. They are more or less fierce, and hence the difference of 'travellers' tales' in relation to them. Even the same species in two different rivers is not always of like disposition. The individuals are affected by outward circumstances, as other animals are. Size, climate, colonisation, all produce their effect; and, what may appear still more singular, their disposition is influenced by the character of the race of men that chances to dwell near them!

On some of the South-American rivers—whose banks are the home of the ill-armed apathetic Indian—the catmans are exceedingly bold, and dangerous to approach. Just so were their congeners, the alligators of the north, till the stalwart backwoodsman, with his axe in one hand and his rifle in the other, taught them to fear the upright form—a proof that these crawling creatures possess the powers of reason. Even to this hour, in many of the swamps and streams of Florida, full-grown old alligators cannot be approached without peril: this is especially the case during the season of the sexes, and still more where these reptiles are encountered remote from the habitations of man.

In Florida are rivers and lagoons where a swimmer would have no more chance of life, than if he had plunged into a sea of sharks. Notwithstanding all this, use brings one to look lightly even upon real danger—particularly when that danger is almost continuous; and the denizen of the cypriere and the white cedar swamp is accustomed to regard without much emotion the menace of the ugly alligator. To the native of Florida, its presence is no novelty, and its going or coming excites but little interest—except perhaps in the bosom of the black man who feeds upon its tail; or the alligator-hunter who makes a living out of its leather.

The appearance of one on the edge of the savanna would not have caused me a second thought, had it not been for its peculiar movements, as well as those I had just observed on the part of the mulatto. I could not help fancying that there was some connection between them; at all events it appeared certain, that the reptile was following the man!

Whether it had him in view, or whether trailing him by the scent, I could not tell. The latter I fancied to be the case; for the mulatto had entered under cover of the maize-plants, before the other appeared outside the timber; and it could hardly have seen him as it turned towards the gap. It might, but I fancied not. More like, it was trailing him by the scent; but whether the creature was capable of doing so, I did not stay to inquire.

On it crawled over the sward—crossing the corner of the meadow, and directly upon the track which the man had taken. At intervals, it paused, flattened its breast against the earth and remained for some seconds in this attitude, as if resting itself. Then it would raise its body to nearly a yard in height, and move forward with apparent eagerness—as if in obedience to some attractive power in advance of it! The alligator progresses but slowly upon dry ground—not faster than a duck or goose. The water is its true element, where it makes way almost with the rapidity of a fish.

At length it approached the gap; and, after another pause, it drew its long dark body within the enclosure. I saw it enter among the maize-plants, at the exact point where the mulatto had disappeared! Of course, it was now also hidden from my view. I no longer doubted that the monster was following the man; and equally certain was I that the latter knew that he was followed! How could I doubt either of these facts? To the former, I was an eye-witness; of the latter, I had circumstantial proofs. The singular attitudes and

actions of the mulatto; his taking out the bars and leaving the gap free; his occasional glances backward—which I had observed as he was crossing the open ground—these were my proofs that he knew what was coming behind him—undoubtedly he knew.

But my conviction upon these two points in nowise helped to elucidate the mystery—for a mystery it had become. Beyond a doubt, the reptile was drawn after by some attraction, which it appeared unable to resist—its eagerness in advancing was evidence of this, and proved that the man was exercising some influence over it that lured it forward.

What influence? Was he beguiling it by some charm of Obeah?

A superstitious shudder came over me, as I asked myself the question. I really had such fancies at the moment. Brought up, as I had been, among Africans, dandled in the arms—perhaps nourished from the bosom—of many a sable nurse, it is not to be wondered at that my young mind was tainted with the superstitions of Bonny and Benin. I knew there were alligators in the excess swamp—in its more remote recesses, some of enormous size—but how Yellow Jake had contrived to lure one out, and cause it to follow him over the dry cultivated ground, was a puzzle I could not explain to myself. I could think of no natural cause; I was therefore forced into the regions of the weird and supernatural.

I stood for a long while watching and wondering. The deer had passed out of my mind. They fed unnoticed: I was too much absorbed in the mysterious movements of the half-breed and his amphibious follower.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TURTLE-CRAWL.

So long as they remained in the maize-field, I saw nothing of either. The direction of my view was slightly oblique to the rows of the plants. The corn was at full growth, and its tall culms and broad lanceolate leaves would have overtopped the head of a man on horse-back. A thicket of evergreen trees would not have been more impenetrable to the eye.

By going a little to the right, I should have become aligned with the rows, and could have seen far down the avenues between them; but this would have carried me out of the cover, and the mulatto might then have seen me. For certain reasons, I did not desire he should; and I remained where I had hitherto been standing.

I was satisfied that the man was still making his way up the field, and would in due time discover himself in the open ground.

An indigo flat lay between the hommock and the maize. To approach the house, it would be necessary for him to pass through the indigo; and, as the plants were but a little over two feet in height, I could not fail to observe him as he came through. I waited, therefore, with a feeling of curious anticipation—my thoughts still wearing a tinge of the weird!

He came on slowly—very slowly; but I knew that he was advancing. I could trace his progress by an occasional movement which I observed among the leaves and tassels of the maize. The morning was still—not a breath of air stirred; and consequently the motion must have been caused by some one passing among the plants—of course by the mulatto himself. The oscillation observed farther off, told that the alligator was still following.

Again and again I observed this movement among the maize-blades. It was evident the man was not following the direction of the rows, but crossing diagonally through them! For what purpose? I could not guess. Any one of the intervals would have conducted him in a direct line towards the house—whither I supposed him to be moving. Why, then, should he adopt a more difficult course, by crossing them? It was not till afterwards that I discovered his object in this zigzag movement.

He had now advanced almost to the outer edge of the cornfield. The indigo that was of no great breadth, and he was already so near, that I could hear the rustling of the cornstalks as they switched against each other.

Another sound I could now hear; it resembled the howling of a dog.

I heard it again, and, after an interval, again. It was not the voice of a full-grown dog, but rather the weak whimper of a puppy.

At first, I fancied that the sounds came from the alligator; for these reptiles make exactly such a noise—but only when young. The one following the mulatto was full grown; the cries could not proceed from it. Moreover, the sounds came from a point nearer me—from the place where the man himself was moving.

(To be continued.)

A WORD IN SEASON.

A few months ago a country merchant came to the city to make his regular purchases. He was a man whose credit was good, and his business talent more than respectable; but his manners were brusque, approaching to rudeness, and his language started every sensitive ear by its profanity. A Christian merchant, with whom he had traded for years, had been often pained by this want of reverence; but knowing well the character of the man, and fearing to offend him by any reproof, had kept silence. On this occasion, however, with a conscience quickened, and a heart made tender, by the special presence of the Divine Spirit in the city, he felt constrained to speak. The language of his customer seemed more reckless and profane than ever before, and he asked very kindly if he was aware how such language jarred on the ears of others.

The country merchant looked surprised, and asked in reply if he talked worse than people generally. "Many of your friends are grieved at your growing profanity," was the answer, "and fear that the habit will soon become incurable."

You are not in earnest, are you? Am I really very profane?

Your language has often pained me, and others, very deeply; but we feared speaking to you about it, lest you should be angry and think it officious."

"I thank you with all my heart for your kindness, and will try to guard myself in the future. I have always prided myself on being thought independent and manly, but I did not suppose I was considered very profane."

The mind of the Christian merchant was greatly relieved. He had administered reproof kindly but faithfully, and it had been received in quite a different spirit from what he had anticipated. He had little hope, however, of a complete reform; for the habit so long indulged, and so in accordance with the natural disposition of the man, was not likely to be soon eradicated.

A few days afterwards, however, a friend met him, and while speaking of the wonderful revivals prevailing in many parts of the country, told him that a work of grace was making many converts in P., among a class of hardened persons rarely reached by the influences of the gospel. Among these converts, aided he, is our old acquaintance M.—whom you remember as a profane and ungodly man. The Christian merchant was filled with wonder and thankfulness, (and his heart was more impressed with the power of Divine grace) that his brief admonition had led the country trader to thoughtfulness, and in that state of mind he had gone to the sanctuary, unvisited previously for many years, and had there been awakened and converted. He felt, then, as never before, the importance of sowing beside all waters.—*Watchman and Reflector.*

A SAD HISTORY.—Two years ago the wife of John Rain, a then respectable mechanic of Cincinnati, died and he took to drink to relieve his sorrow. Three daughters thus left to contend with poverty, and without the good advice and example of a father became a prey to vicious men and vicious thoughts. An improper intimacy sprang up between a man named Mitchell, and the eldest daughter, and her father in a moment of sensitive appreciation of the wrong done her, slew the paramour, and for this was tried and sent to the Penitentiary. The downward course of the daughters was then rapid. Two have just been convicted of grand larceny, and will be sent to the State Prison. The remaining—the youngest—is now in the House of Refuge.

Admiration is the rose, affection is its fragrance.

Arts and Sciences.

HABITS OF BEWILDERED PERSONS.

From the Scientific American.

Messrs Editors.—In a late number of your paper you state, in answer to some correspondent, that you have no confidence in the report that "when a man is lost he will travel in a circle." In this you are certainly mistaken; it is a fact well-known to all frontiersmen that, when persons are bewildered, they frequently travel in a perfect circle, sometimes keeping the same track until they have made half a dozen equal rounds; at other times making the circle larger or smaller each time. It is not by any means always the case, when a person is lost; but it is so frequent that it is within the experience of every one who has been much in the woods. In calm and cloudy weather, and in a country of much sameness of appearance, the best woodsmen get so bewildered as to "take the circles." Persons not accustomed to the woods will sometimes do so, when the sun is shining and a steady breeze blowing. On the level or gulf prairies of this country on a calm, foggy morning, no man can travel without a road. It is an incident of everyday occurrence in the Spring and Fall seasons, that men are thus becalmed on the prairie as effectually as are ships at sea; nor will a compass mend the matter, for it cannot be carried steadily enough to keep its meridian, and the course it points cannot be kept for fifty yards; if a man attempts it, he will make a circle and come back to the place he started from. The circle will be large or small generally in proportion to the fog—sometimes only a hundred yards in diameter; at other times a mile but seldom more. The circles thus made are perfect. This kind of wandering seems to arise from an attempt to go a straight course when there is nothing to guide the senses, or when the usual guides of sun, wind, or the general contour of the country are disregarded. It rarely befalls children, who do not attempt to go on a course, but only run from one visible point to another equally perceptible.

Many apparently trivial traits in the disposition of animals, which are of great use to woodsmen, are omitted in books of natural history; chiefly from ignorance, no doubt. One of these is the disposition of a horse, when frightened, to run against the wind, if any is blowing. Thousands of horses which would be otherwise irretrievably lost annually, on this frontier, are recovered by observing this simple rule in pursuit. All animals have similar inexplicable traits in their disposition; and men are no exception to the rule. White men, when they are scared, will retreat in the same direction in which they came. The Indians know this and lay their plans accordingly; and many a gallant company has been cut to pieces, simply from ignorance of this fact. But those who understand these matters, when they find it necessary to make a hasty retreat, always do so in a straight line, and in a direction different from the one in which they came. We frequently see notices in northern papers of children being lost. Such things rarely occur on this frontier; though children often wander, and there are but few neighbors to help to search for them. Perhaps the cause of humanity might be subserved by publishing a few rules to be observed in such searches. Any child will make a track or trail plain enough to be followed by the eye, over any ground, unless there be much passing of men or animals to spoil the trail; and it can be followed by almost any person of good sight, although he may not have had any previous experience. Go to the place where the child was last seen, and look for the trail, glancing along the ground with a sharp scanning look; when it is found, a faint kind of a line will be seen, which may be followed at a sharp walk, until a well-defined track occurs. If the trail probably lose the trail, and must go back and take it up again with the same scanning glance along the ground. The trail which hunters and Indians follow skillfully, is not so much composed of tracks or footprints, as of indescribable little signs, such as leaves and blades of grass

bent or turned, twigs broken, and other things so small and faint that they cannot be shown to any one, yet which, when all put together, make a kind of line along the ground, which line can be seen by a rapid glancing look, but which will disappear when looked at steady. The trail of a human being is more easily followed than that of any other creature, because there is a kind of purpose in it, different from the trail of irrational animals. A child will change its course around every thick clump of bushes, and go nearly straight where the ground is open. If it is scared and running it will run from the wind, if much is blowing, and from any voice it hears; in such cases, therefore, it is not good policy to call much upon the lost child's name. M.M.K. Goliad, Texas, March 1859.

VARIABLE BRIGHTNESS OF THE STARS.

We ascertain that the sun revolves around an axis by noticing the spots on its surface. When there are many spots toward us, the light of the sun must be enfeebled, sometimes even sensibly so. There are a few stars that periodically become dim, and then again assume their former brightness. The natural solution of this fact is that these stars are like the sun, not merely in their light, but also in the way that light is produced. Perhaps there are spots upon its surface, which, when turned toward us, cause their light to become dim. There are stars also which may be called temporary, for after appearing in the heaven for a brief period, they seemingly become very small, or they disappear altogether, a fact which can hardly be accounted for, except by the supposition that there has been a real physical change in the body itself. In undergoing these changes, there have been manifest changes of their color, and these have been so great as to lead to the conclusion that there has been a combustion of the body in question. The star seen by Ausubel, in 1670, was of the third magnitude; it passed through great fluctuations of light for two years, and then became invisible. There are, moreover, lost stars, whose places are now vacant, though some of them have been recently observed. When we look at these strange fluctuations we may suppose that something like combustion has taken place, or that the power of giving light by these stars has been suspended. In reviewing these facts, it appears difficult not to conclude that here was a world whose destiny was, for the time being, completed, and the fitful glare of whose funeral pile shooting across the vast distance which separates us, came with undiminished velocity to tell us the tale that it once was.—*Professor Alexander.*

NOISES IN A SICK ROOM.

It is extraordinary how many persons, unaccustomed to the sick room, mistake certain noises for quiet. When such people have to walk across the room they do so with a balancing sort of movement that makes every plank creak uneasily. Their very dress rattles in a way that would make the fortune of a rattle-snake. If anything has to be said, it is spoken in a loud whisper, that conceals the words but makes the most irritating of noises. Now the silence of a sick room must not be labored, it must be natural. Shoes that do not creak must be worn, and in walking the foot must be put down carefully, of course, but with a firm step, that comes gently, yet steadily, on the floor. This will not make the creaking sound by the toe-pointed, gingerly mode of movement so much a loathed by those whose experience of sick rooms is small. The dress must be made of some noiseless material, wool or cotton; silk must be avoided, for it squeaks with every movement. In speaking, the pitch of the voice must be slightly raised, and the words, instead of being hissed as in a whispering, should be clipped short, and cut distinctly. By this means the person spoken to will hear what is said, while the least possible sound accompanies the word.—*Barwell's cure of the Sick.*

The London Times says that there are 9,000 miles of railway in Great Britain, which has cost £3-15,000,000, or \$1,575,000,000!—The average interest which they pay is about 3 1/2 per cent.

KNOWLEDGE.—Learning is an ornament in prosperity, a refuge in adversity, and a provision in old age.

A gentleman told his little boy, a child of four years, to shut the gate. He made the request three times, and the youngster paid no attention to it. "I have told you three times, my son, to shut the gate," said the gentleman, sorrowfully. "And I've told you three times, lisp'd the child, 'that I won't do it. You must be stupid!"

Experience is the best advisor, but it is better to learn by others than our own.